

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SELA, ECIN, VE
SUBJECT: SELA ACTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORTS
SERIOUS MALNUTRITION PROBLEM IN LATIN
AMERICA

1. DURING PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED TO DISCUSS THE RESULTS
OF LAST WEEK'S MEETING OF THE SELA COMMITTEE DEALING WITH
NUTRITION AND FOOD ADDITIVES, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN DR. MIGUEL
OSIO SANDOVAL REPORTED THAT MORE THAN 150 MILLION LATIN
AMERICANS CONSUME FEWER CALORIES PER DAY THAN THE MINIMUM
RECOMMENDED BY THE FAO. IN MOST CASES, HE SAID, THE PEOPLE
OF LATIN AMERICA SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD THE COST OF AN
ADEQUATE DIET. THUS THE ROOT CAUSE OF MALNUTRITION WAS THE
UNDERDEVELOPED STATE OF THE ECONOMIES OF MANY REGIONS
OF LATIN AMERICA.

2. OSIO SANDOVAL AGREED THAT MANY COUNTRIES IN LATIN
AMERICAN RECOGNIZED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM IN TERMS
OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COSTS, AND HAD UNDERTAKEN NATIONAL
PROGRAMS TO DEAL WITH MALNUTRITION BUT THESE PROGRAMS
WERE ONLY PARTIALLY EFFECTIVE. IN MOST CASES, THE PROGRAMS
WERE OF A MEDIUM OR LONG TERM NATURE, AND HAD LITTLE
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IMMEDIATE IMPACT. IN ADDITION, THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE
THAT REGIONAL COOPERATION AND CONSIDERATIONS WERE FACTORS
IN DEVELOPING NATIONAL PLANS.

3. AS A RESULT, HE SAID HIS ACTION COMMITTEE HAD RECOMMENDED
TO MEMBER GOVERNMENTS THAT THEY APPROVE PROGRAMS WHICH WOULD
PROVIDE TO THEIR POPULATIONS NUTRITIOUS DIETARY SUPPLMENTS

AT LOW COST. THIS COULD BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE PRODUCTION OF HIGHLY NUTRITIOUS FOODS NOT NOW NORMALLY A PART OF THE AVERAGE MAN'S DIET, AND THROUGH THE USE OF FOOD ADDITIVES TO INCREASE THE NUTRITION VALUE OF MORE TRADITIONAL FOODS. A KEY ELEMENT OF SELA'S RECOMMENDATIONS IS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPANIES IN THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES WHICH WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRODUCTION, MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD ADDITIVES. HE CALLED FOR A MEETING OF GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR EXPERTS TO DEVELOP SPECIFIC ACTION PLANS CONSISTENT WITH THE INTERESTS OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES AND WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF HIS ACTION COMMITTEE.

4. EMBASSY WILL DISCUSS RESULTS OF ACTION COMMITTEE WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS DURING THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS AND WILL SUBMIT COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS WHEN AVAILABLE. OUR PRE-LIMINARY IMPRESSION, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS ACHIEVED SOMETHING IMPORTANT SIMPLY BY FOCUSING ATTENTION ON A BASIC PROBLEM WHICH TRANSCENDS NATIONAL BORDERS AND AFFECTS THE DAILY LIFE OF MILLIONS OF LATIN AMERICANS. THE BALL IS NOW IN THE COURT OF INDIVIDUAL NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, WHO MUST CONSIDER THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENT THEM EFFECTIVELY.
VAKY

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